
BOOK NOTES

Edward Fullbrook (Ed.)

Pluralist Economics

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The case for pluralism – giving space to competing schools of thought that provide alternatives to orthodox views – can apply to any discipline. Pluralism is the antidote to dogma. It is the necessary feature of an intellectual environment in which critique and innovation flourish. Arguably, it is the essence of the quest for a scientific approach, particularly in social sciences where controlled experiments under laboratory conditions do not normally apply and where personal judgements are inescapable.

In the case of economics, pluralism is the means by which the dominance of neoclassical orthodoxy can be contested. And contested it should be. As the French students who initiated the ‘post-autistic economics movement’ wrote in 2000, ‘This [neoclassical] approach is supposed to explain everything by means of a purely axiomatic approach, as if this were THE economic truth. We do not accept this dogmatism, we want a pluralism of approaches ...’

Edward Fullbrook has been seeking to promote the critique of orthodoxy and the development of pluralistic alternatives through his editing of the post autistic economics newsletter [www.paecon.net/PAEReview/] and previous publications such as *The Crisis in Economics* [Routledge 2003]. Here he assembles the work of 15 authors to describe what is wrong with the dominant economic orthodoxy, why pluralism is needed and how pluralist practice may be pursued.

There is one article – by Peter Earl – on pluralism in economics *teaching* but more on this aspect would have been useful, because it is in the classroom that the process of disciplinary reproduction and reinforcement most directly occurs. We know – from experience in the University of Sydney’s political economy program and elsewhere – that pluralism is possible and effective. So the key question is why is it so rarely attempted and so resolutely resisted.